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FOR 1874.

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The Daily Press.

HONGKONG, SEPTEMBER 10TH, 1874.

A REMARK which is made by Sir H. M. Martyn, the author of the History of Ancient Law, might be very advantageously born in mind by the numerous persons at home who pretend to be able to judge of affairs in China with far greater accuracy than can be attained by those whose views are founded upon experience acquired upon the spot. The above-named eminent thinker points out that one of the commonest errors which is fallen into is that of attributing to people and times totally different from our own, the ideas, feelings and thoughts which are familiar to ourselves. In other words, the habit of arguing by analogy which is deprecated as most dangerous by all who have given attention to the subject, is pointed out as one of the chief sources of misconception. Works such as the above are familiar to most writers at home, and in treating any historical or philosophical subject, few writers are found who are unmindful of the salutary lessons of caution which they teach. But whenever a writer in England takes upon himself to deal with matters connected with China, we find that he is prepared to throw aside every precaution which he would use in regard to other subjects, and is content with conclusions founded upon the broadest deductions and the most deceptive analogies. It is true that the study of mankind is man, it is still more obviously true to those who are practically conversant with the subject that the study of Chinese nature is Chinaman, that it is as hopeless to arrive at any conclusion worthy of attention upon matters connected with this country without a careful and systematic study of facts, as it is acknowledged to be with regard to all other subjects.

With, however, the greatest inconsistency, it is invariably assumed that the judgments of the persons at home with reference to events in China are likely to be far more accurate than those formed by men on the spot, who have devoted years to their study. In order to give an appearance of force to this obvious fallacy, it is generally assumed that opinions expressed by mercantile men in China are directly opposed to those of all persons whose views are worthy of respect, a statement which has some plausibility on account of its having often happened that the views of merchants in China have been in antagonism to the theories which diplomats have been forced to maintain as an excuse for inaction. There are, however, many men, whose opinions upon Chinese questions are worthy of respect, who are connected neither with the mercantile nor the diplomatic world, and whose views coincide with those generally entertained and expressed by merchants in China, and the argument that mercantile men are so much biased by their interests that their experience can not be relied upon to lead them to sound conclusions, is made much more of than it should be.

An instance of this tendency to hasty generalization occurred a short time ago in the columns of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the writer gravely arguing that because the Chinese in the French Concession at Shanghai presented M. Gouraud, the French Consul there, with a *Van-min-sau* or ten thousand people umbrella, M. Gouraud was quite right in having conceded the road-question immediately after the mob had made an almost successful rising. It is argued that the French merchants were entirely wrong in concluding that the action would be construed into one of feebleness and humility, as the way in which it was regarded was shown conclusively by the presentation of the *Van-min-sau* to be quite the opposite, and this fact was confirmed by the subsequent tranquillity—for the enormous space of about three months—of the French Settlement. It is easy for people out here to smile at the ignorance displayed in this marvellous generalization, and to feel amused at the naive manner in which the writer, who dogmatically sets himself up to counteract

the effects of what he terms "another instance of incapacity for forming opinions upon passing political events in China," judges of the few points with which he is acquainted from a home standard. Because a deposition at home would not wait upon a Minister with an address expressive of their approval of his conduct unless that conduct met with the approbation of a large number of Englishmen, therefore, the fact that an umbrella was presented by the partisans of the Ningpo rioters in Shanghai must conclusively show a full approbation of his conduct in the part of the whole of the Chinese residents there, and aforesaid the subject is one which requires a good deal of consideration; but while we cannot look for much promptitude from officials who shew such complete indifference when called upon to perform a duty of a more urgent nature, we may at least hope that our Consul would not receive a "Van-min-sau" as an impediment to his passing over lightly.—*Herald*.

DEBT AND INCAPABLE.—
Wm. Trotter, a seaman on the British ship *Morning Light*, charged with being drunk and incapable on the Bank wharf, on the 9th instant was fined 25 cents.

DRUNK AND INCAPABLE.—
Mr. Alfred Gray, the Warden of the Gaol, charged John Crittenton, a seaman unemployed, with being a rogue and vagabond, and said that the defendant had for the last two weeks been allowed to come to the gaol for food and at night to sleep, so as to admit of his finding a ship.

The defendant admitted being drunk, and said he had encouraged to renewed attempts at rising. Because too, the Settlement will not be encouraged to renewed attempts at rising. Because too, the Settlement

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Extracts.

SOME WORDS ABOUT DINING.

"Qui mange bien travaille bien."
(He who eats well works well.)

Franco Favara.

I have already remarked that good conversation, if not essential to, constitutes, at least to educated men, the real enjoyment even of a good dinner. I think it is Talleyrand who said that conversation "is one of the lost arts, although that very able man did much to revive it, having been one of the most brilliant and witty conversationalists of his age. But conversation, however interesting or sparkling, will not altogether supply or stanch the discomfit of an ill-cooked, ill-served, or insufficient dinner." In "The Newcomes," Thackeray, says that "F. B." entertained Cline Newcome "with profound compliments and surprising conversation"—very unsubstantial food, it must be confessed, and which reminds one of M. Jourdin's remark, in Melville's play:

"Le vis de bons soups et pas de bons langages."

However, "surprise" conversation may be, it is necessary to be very cautious in your remarks in a mixed dinner party. There is a certain tact in requisite which can only be acquired by habitual diners-out. You don't know what unpleasant recollections may be aroused, or what sensitive raw you may touch, even by the most innocent remark. Thus, a friend of mine once gave mortal offence to a monied novice who, had made what the Yankees call a "pile," at some "digging," and with whom he often dined by remarking that he was very fond of *ham bacon*. He subsequently ascertained that his host had a very narrow escape of *us per col.* at the hands of a vigilance Committee, for horse stealing, in the very agreeable country from whence he had returned. In fact, one can't be too cautious now-a-days; and for that reason I hear the word "rope" has been prudently tabooed in Australian society, lest it should wound the susceptibilities of some people. There is much wisdom in the advice of a shrewd Scotch Laird to his son, who was going, for the first time, to a large dinner party: "Say nothing, but look friendly."

An Arabian, named Mouslim, who flourished in the time of Mahomed, and who set up to be a rival prophet, taught that the soul of man is situated in his abdomen—a doctrine in which I am strongly disposed to believe. At all events, it may be safely affirmed that the direct road to man's heart lies through their stomachs. Aware of this fact, Napoleon's parting advice to a diplomatist whom he had accredited to some Court was—"Tenez bonne table de soignes les femmes"—give good dinners and cultivate the women. Acting also on this principle, Lord Elgin, the late Viceroy of India, was enabled to acquire information which was useful to him in governing that great Empire. "By this means" (giving dinners), says his lordship in one of his letters, "I got acquainted with individuals, and if my bees have any honey in them I extract it at the moment of the day when it is most gushing." That plan showed a sound knowledge of human nature on the part of that distinguished and amiable man.

There is nothing about which men's tastes differ so widely as on matters of food and drink, and also as to the constituents of a dinner. A kindly German proverb says: "A dinner should consist of 'ein Gericht und ein freundlich Gesicht,' which may be freely translated, "One dish and a good fellow." No doubt, one can manage to dine, after a fashion, off a single dish, provided it be very good, and that one has a sharp appetite. Even one good dish may be too much for some persons. A countryman of mine, or being asked if he had ever dined with a certain Town Councillor, of Dublin, replied: "Yes, I dined with him once; but the fellow was rather contentious—with his leg of mutton!" Such is often the gratitude of meat-eaters for their entertainers!—but really, it is not pleasant to dwell on these aberrations from the legitimate cuisine; and they remind one of the joke (rather old now) of Charles Lamb's who, on being asked by a fond mother how he liked children, replied "Boiled, ma'am." Ere dropping these eccentricities of eating, I must remark that I view with great disfavour the attempts made to introduce horse flesh as an article of diet at home. When we consider the relative prices of horses and cattle, the meat of the former cannot be possibly sold as cheap as that of the latter, to which horse meat must be much inferior. Nature never intended the horse to be the food of man, but to be like the dog, his intelligent companion, and above all, his strong and most useful servant. Even the most barbarous and savage men feel a natural repugnance to eat an animal so closely akin to us as the monkey; but men who have been as unnatural as to commit that act of cannibalism (as I must call it) as to eat their own flesh resemble roast turkey. I am inclined to think it would taste more like roast man. It was a true philosopher who, moralising over the skeleton of a donkey, exclaiming: "We are indeed, fearfully and wonderfully made."

Reader, have you ever experienced—when sitting down to table, a certain feeling which instantly warns you, even before the soup is served, that you are about to have a bad dinner? I have often felt it, and the presentation, was invariably realized. In "Le Soir de St. Petersburg," Count Joseph De Maistre says that, in the midst of the fierce rage, the din, and the strife of two actors engaged in battle, one of them is suddenly seized with a panic fear, convincing them that they are beaten, and which chills the hearts and paralyzes the frame even of the bravest soldiers. This is the feeling that all experienced Generals dread in their hearts; for it may descend on the troops training for battle, and at once convert what would have been a great victory on their feet into utter defeat. The forewarning feeling, before a dinner, that it will be a bad one, closely akin to the disconcerting fear of the soldiers in battle, so well and so truly described by De Maistre. Happy are those who have never known the former! It is a fearful sensation which sends a chill to the very marrow of your bones. The absence of this presentiment always imparts sunshine to my soul, because I then know that I shall dine well. This mysterious instinct is very rare. I have mentioned numerous men who also possessed it. He was a Frenchman who, in a Paris restaurant, declared that he had the instinct in a high degree, on arriving even at the door of a house where he was to dine, he would know it always uncertain. He also assured me that he had it, while another person, besides myself, who had the same singular prescience. Of course, to become most intimate—it is painful to add, however, that, as parting, he borrowed a five franc piece from me, and I never saw him again.

Considering this article to be sufficiently long, I shall terminate it here; but shall, upon the subject in another communication, say something remarkable concerning the culinary processes visible through the grilles in the pavement-going on underground. Recollections of other tables d'hôte crowd upon me; but as I cannot recall anything remarkable concerning them, I shall dismiss them here.

When any article of diet takes an epicure's fancy, he waxes enthusiastic over it, and is apt to greatly exaggerate its merits. Thus John Sterling says of red mullets: "He who has not ate it has not begun to live;" and Mr. Russell, of the Times, speaking of a China and Japan, and at Singapore, said: "Genoese, and Policies of Insurance Agents, second, and Policies of Insurance granted at the rates of Premium current at the above-mentioned Ports. No charge for Policy fee."

JAS. B. GOUGHTRY, Secretary.
Hongkong, 1st November, 1871. [pp. 83]

INSURANCES.

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SIEMSEN & Co., Agents.
at 1023 Hongkong, 1st July, 1874.

OFFICE OF THE CHINA TRADERS' INSURANCE COMPANY, LIMITED.

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HOLLIDAY WISE & Co., Agents.
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CHINA to AMERICA.

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